



DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Child support staff pitch in at Thanksgiving

From Justine Peters, Communications Liaison

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Rather than celebrating with the standard office party, the Office of Child Support's Program Development Division will observe the holiday season by helping others. The division includes the policy and training teams.

Twelve staff members on Nov. 24 prepared baskets containing food and recipes needed to prepare a full meal on Thanksgiving Day for local families in need.

The event was sponsored by Lansing's Old Town Commercial Association through a program called the "Compassionate Feast."



Office of Child Support staff helped with Lansing's Compassionate Feast that helped local residents at Thanksgiving.



Last year, the program supplied more than 120 families with complete Thanksgiving dinners.

On Dec. 2, six other staff members reported to one of the two Habitat for Humanity houses under construction in the Lansing area. They worked for half a day hammering, cleaning and painting to help provide a home for those less fortunate than themselves. Program Development Division staff participated in these events using community service leave. Each year, state employees earn up to eight hours of leave to serve the community or local schools. Using this often-overlooked benefit as a team effort helps build team spirit and, most of all, allows the division to give to the community in ways beyond their normal job.

To contribute to either program, please contact Lansing's Old Town Commercial Association at 517-485-4283 or donate to Habitat for Humanity at <http://www.habitat.org/>

Leadership Academy visitors from "down under"

On Oct. 17, Office of Professional Development received visitors from Australia who came to learn more about the Leadership Academy program at DHS.

Chris Thorn, principal strategy analyst for the Government of Victoria and Matt Cavallaro, operations manager for Gallagher Bassett, came as members of the Ambassador program. The program sends leaders to visit various countries to enhance their development and research key selected themes with host organizations.



Pictured left-right are **Bill Patrick**, DHS Office of Professional Development; **Matt Cavallaro**, Gallagher Bassett; **Kelly Morse**, DHS Office of Child Support; **Chris Thorn**, Worksafe Victoria; **Byron Kraynak** and **Lynn Subramanian** from DHS Office of Professional Development.

The visitors came to learn how DHS identified a potential leadership shortage and developed the academy program as part of its succession management strategy. The visitors learned of Leadership Academy from the Innovations in Government Award program sponsored by Harvard University where Leadership Academy was named one of the top 50 innovative programs for 2007 and 2008.

Leadership Academy 2009 selection process is currently under way. Self nomination forms are due Dec. 22, 2008. For more information go to DHS-Net>Departmental Web Sites>Office of Professional Development>Leadership Academy.

— from **Lynn Subramanian**

Poverty Summit closes with local priority areas

Future action will help determine antipoverty efforts in state

DETROIT - Jobs, education, training and safe homes were among the top priorities defined by participants at the 2008 Voices for Action Poverty Summit following the Nov. 13 event that drew almost 5,000 people to Detroit's Cobo Center. In the final session, summit participants met with others from their region to choose their top priority areas they will work on in the coming months. The top priorities identified by participants in each region are:



Region One (Upper Peninsula): Transportation, health care and education.

Region Two (Alcona, Iosco, Alpena, Presque Isle, Antrim, Kalkaska, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Cheboygan, Crawford, Otsego, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Wexford, Montgomery, Oscoda, Ogemaw and Roscommon counties.): Jobs, education, health care, transportation.

Region Three (Kent, Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana and Ottawa counties): Education and health care.

Region Four (Arenac, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Montcalm, Ionia, Mecosta and Osceola counties): Education from early childhood through worker re-education and training.

Region Five (Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, St. Clair, Sanilac and Tuscola counties): Education as a jobs training issue and jobs.

Region Six (Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Van Buren counties): Job creation, homelessness-secure housing, early childhood and post-secondary education.

Region Seven (Clinton, Eaton, Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Shiawassee and Washtenaw counties): Education, peer mentoring and support services; safe affordable housing; job training.

Region Eight (Wayne, Oakland & Macomb counties): Expand access to early childhood education, job creation, and link services for families to schools.

Each group will share a plan to address these issues locally. For more, go to www.michigan.gov/poverty



Halloween at the DHS (top): The DHS Customer Service Unit Fun Committee sponsored a party Oct. 31.

Meanwhile, the "FAT Ps" (Ingham DHS employees front row from left [Annette Stein-Motley](#), [Suelyn VanDeSande](#) and [Mary Thelen](#); back row: [Ann Schafer](#) (supervisor), [Katie Green](#), [Jodi Jones](#), [Pam Taliaferro](#) and [Lindy Powers](#)) won a prize for their Halloween outfits. The name is derived from the CIMS command Food Authorization to Purchase. The Fat Ps won a pizza lunch with the county director.



Otsego County "Love You Packs" help local foster children

In Otsego County, many foster children lack essential items such as personal care products, clothing and school supplies. Two years ago the "Love You Packs" program was started through community donations and activities. The program collects, assembles and distributes backpacks full of school supplies to foster children throughout the year. Project partners include DHS staff members [Joy Breckow](#), [Matt Soderquist](#), [Christy Pudvan](#), [Mark Morrell](#), [Mark Sorenson](#), [Jerry Wells](#) and [Traci Kari](#). [Cindy Pushman](#) and [Bruce Bailey](#) of the Otsego DHS distribute the packs to the children.

"Otsego County is blessed to have people and a program that care for children who are in foster care placement," said Bailey, services supervisor for Otsego DHS. "The children love it." The program has been so successful, it is expanding to include a duffel bag program providing blankets, clothing and personal care items. There are plans to offer foster children the opportunity for a summer camp adventure in 2009.

Say goodbye to locator packets – Staffing Standards goes automated

Staffing Standards Study to become Federal Claims Documentation Study

From Judy Schaus, Staffing Specialist

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Since 1997 the DHS Staffing Standards section data collectors have visited offices to code the work activities of administrative support,



ES, FIS and services specialists. Now, automation has arrived.

DHS has contracted with Interactive Voice Applications to create an email system to conduct random staffing studies. This will involve workers receiving an email where they will answer the questions that the data collectors formerly asked.

This is expected to begin in January 2009. DHS will continue to administer the study, and the Staffing Standards data collectors will be available by telephone and email to assist staff in responding to the study.

During December, all direct care staff will be required to complete an online training for the new email survey process. Emails will be sent to all staff with instructions and a contact number for questions.

Van Buren DHS recognizes volunteers for stellar service

From Sue McCauley

Van Buren DHS, Hartford

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The weather outside may have been chilly but the kindred spirits inside

Van Buren DHS brought a warmth to everyone's heart. On Nov. 7, Van Buren administration recognized their 31 volunteers with a buffet luncheon for the outstanding service they have provided during the past year. Special recognition was given to three legal guardian volunteers for 30 or more years of service: Jennie Stezowski and Gloria Hynes were recognized for 30 years of service and Margaret Odebrecht was recognized for 32 years of service. All three of the volunteers have provided legal guardianship and conservatorship services. The other volunteers that were honored included volunteer transporters, client advocates, legal guardians, in-house volunteers who man the Children's Corner, Clothes Closet and Food Pantry, and Earned Income Tax Credit volunteers.



Stan Parker, Van Buren DHS director at right in photo, thanked them for their outstanding service and encouraged their continued partnership. Parker emphasized the value of their work to the office and the services they provide to the residents of Van Buren County. Van Buren's administration has always recognized and valued the worth of our volunteers. One of the volunteers mentioned she had read a quote several years ago which she never forgot: "We are all angels with only one wing. We can only fly while embracing each other." I wonder how much of a difference we could make if we all embraced just one other person who was struggling?



Beginning January 2009, DHS Staffing Standards data collectors (left-right) **Renee Thielen**, **Rebecca Love**, **Carmen Barba** and **Angela Barbee** will no longer be traveling to DHS local offices to do the time study. A new study will be completed by email connection to appropriate DHS staff around Michigan.

Due to the changes in the process of the study, Staffing Standards thought this would be a good time to change the name of the study to more accurately reflect the federal cost allocation purpose. Therefore, the **Staffing Standards Study** will now be known as the **Federal Claims Documentation Study**. In addition, the Staffing Standards and Allocation Section will become Staffing and Resource Allocation.

Surveys will begin in January and staff will be blocked from participation until they have completed the online training. It is anticipated that each worker will receive approximately four surveys per month.

The Staffing Standards section is responsible for collecting data on the time spent by local office staff in order to claim millions of dollars in TANF, IV-E and other federal funds. This federal cost allocation reporting is required for every state; in Michigan it covers DHS salary and other administrative costs.

Local office staff have been very accommodating and data collectors have enjoyed meeting our dedicated staff throughout the state. As always, your cooperation is critical and very much appreciated.

Date: Nov. 19
To: Kathryn Ross, Services Supervisor
Huron County DHS, Bad Axe
Subj: Terry Sorenson

I am a family worker at Hope House, which is a branch of Child and Family Services. Hope House is a residential treatment center for teenage girls. I have worked with many caseworkers through my 15 years of services. This includes Terry Sorenson.

Terry has been an exceptional caseworker and I would like you to know that I appreciate her dedication and professionalism. Terry stays in close contact with the treatment team at Hope House to keep apprised of the residents' status. She also stays in contact with the girls that she places at Hope House. Terry visits her placements on a regular basis.

An example of Terry's good work was evident at a recent family meeting in Bad Axe. The meeting took place on Veteran's Day, which was a vacation day for DHS. Terry attended this meeting and did an admirable job working with this particularly difficult family. Rarely do I have the experience to work with a caseworker who has such a therapeutic understanding of family dynamics. It was a pleasure for me to have her attend that meeting. Although Terry showed care and concern for this girl and her family, she was not shy about giving them a dose of reality; Terry was firm in her expectations of family members and informed the family of what would happen if those expectations were not met.

Terry clearly reflects one who works toward the goal of attaining the best possible outcome for her clients. Please express my appreciation to Terry for the excellent care she provides for the girls and the exceptional work she does. The Department of Human Services is fortunate to have a caseworker like Terry. As far as working with her, the honor is mine.

Jane M. Wood, Family Worker
Hope House, Alpena

■ Terry Sorenson is a juvenile justice specialist at Huron County DHS.

Coming and going in Grand Traverse DHS

From Cindy Nelson, Family Independence Manager
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Grand Traverse County DHS has said goodbye to several eligibility specialists recently. **Joan Stine** transferred to Kalkaska County DHS and is doing well there with her husband and young daughter. In addition, **Melinda Dean** transferred to another office and is now doing secretarial work for them, and **Rebecca Noffsinger** has transferred to Antrim County to work in the clerical department and to be much closer to home. We wish these ladies well in their new positions and want to express our thanks for all of the hard work they did while working with us in Grand Traverse County. We miss their smiling faces.

While it is sad to see our friends leave, it also opens doors for new friends to walk in. **Tom Jessmore** recently joined our team of eligibility specialists as he chose to leave the banking world, and **Erin Norton**, who previously worked as a travel agent, is now one of our new eligibility specialists. **Hahna Ginzel**, **Sarah Dodds**, **Terese Urban**, and **Amber Bowers** all arrived in our office on the same day to join our eligibility specialist staff. These women bring us a variety of experiences such as banking, property management, military, and accounting/retail. It is a very exciting time at the Grand Traverse office and we are expecting another new arrival any day now. Welcome to our team!

Your letters...
intercepted
and
otherwise

Volunteer to help at tax time

The Earned Income Tax Credit supplements wages and reduces the tax burden for low- or moderate-income workers. It is available to married or single workers with or without children that meet income requirements. Each year, more and more citizens seek assistance from Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, or VITA, sites to help them fill out their tax forms for free. Because of this, volunteers at VITA sites are needed.

Volunteers prepare tax forms, set up the sites, provide financial education/literacy information, do registration and intake, and assist with special events. You can sign up now if you would like to volunteer for the 2009 tax season. Training will be provided. You can sign up in one of three ways:

- Call 800-865-8683 or go online to www.michiganeic.org.
- Call 211, United Way's Information Call Center.
- Connect to <http://www.michiganeic.org> volunteer resources to contact in your area.

Like the activities Office of Child Support staff participate in on the page 1 story, this too can be a way to become more involved in your community, help others, and use the eight-hour school and community participation leave.

DHS Matters! is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services
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